MY QUEEN

A WEEKLY JOURNAL FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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MARION MARLOWE'S TRUE HEART

OR HOW A DAUGHTER FORGAVE

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

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Marion Marlowe's True Heart;

OR,

HOW A DAUGHTER FORGAVE.

By GRACE SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN.

It was a cold, dreary day and the country was white with snow, causing the sparsely settled village of Hickorytown to look even more desolate than usual.

Old Deacon Joshua Marlowe and his wife were seated in the dingy kitchen of the old farmhouse, and it was plainly to be seen that they were both worried and angry.

The farmer's elbows were on his knees and his head between his hands, and as he sat in silent meditation he spitefully chewed a long wisp of straw.

Martha Marlowe dried her eyes with her apron now and then, and finally a decided sniff evinced to her husband that she was crying.

Instead of becoming more calm at this sign of his wife's grief, Deacon Marlowe raised his head and scowled at her angrily.

"'Tain't no use tew snivel about it, Marthy," he said, snappishly. "It's got tew be did, an' thet's all thar is about it! Sile's got the mor'gage on the farm, an' he's a-goin' tew foreclose, an' all the cryin' yew kin dew won't help matters any."

"But where be we a-goin'?" asked his wife, desperately. "I've asked Samanthy tew take us, an' she 'lows Tom won't have us!"

"Tom's a doggoned jackass!" was the farmer's answer. "Ef I'd a-knowed how tarnal stingy he wuz, I'd never hev let Samanthy marry him!"

"Waal, you wuz pretty sot on the matter, Joshuy!" snapped his wife, with some spirit. "The Lord knows, Samanthy didn't want tew marry him!"

There was no answer to this, so Mrs. Marlowe grew bolder.

"Marion told yew how it would turn out when yew done it, Joshuy, an', in spite of that,

yew done yewr best tew make Dollie marry Sile Johnson! Not but that yew meant well by the gal," she added, a little more humbly, "but it shows on the face of it that it ain't right fer a father tew interfere in sech matters. Ef our children hadn't been driv so by their father, they might a-been here tew comfort us this minute!"

She put her apron up to her face and burst out crying now. Her mother heart had at last conquered her fear of her husband.

"I hain't a-lookin' fer comfort, Marthy," said the old farmer, stubbornly. "The facts of the case is clear, an' we've got tew face 'em!"

"Yew mean we've got tew leave the old home an' go tew the Poor Farm, I s'pose," was the answer. "Oh, Joshuy! It's hard, an' I ain't done nothin' tew deserve it!"

Joshua Marlowe arose and paced the floor excitedly. For the first time in his life he began to feel the twinges of a rebuking conscience.

Only two years before he had been a fairly prosperous farmer, with a good wife and three of the prettiest daughters to be found in that section.

When Tom Wilders, a lean, lanky, close-fisted farmer from his own town, asked to marry Samantha; he gave her to him without a word, and his eldest daughter, who inherited her mother's meekness, accepted him for a husband, knowing that she loathed the fellow.

Only a little while after the marriage, Tom Wilders called on the deacon. His interview with his father-in-law was strictly private, but in some way it cost the deacon exactly five hundred dollars.

Where he got the money no one knew for a time, but very soon Silas Johnson, another neighbor, began suing boldly for the hand of Dollie Marlowe.

Dollie was only seventeen but she had more spirit than Samantha, and, better yet, she had her sister Marion to protect her.

For what the rest of the women of the Marlowe family lacked in spirit, beautiful, gray-eyed Marion made up in full. As she grew older she developed the determination of her father, but it was backed by honor and good judgment, and her love for her twin sister made her as fearless as a lion.

Quite by accident Marion learned of her father's reason for assenting to Silas Johnson's suit. He had given Silas a mortgage on the farm for five hundred dollars in order to obtain the money to loan to Tom Wilders.

Now, when the mortgage was to be foreclosed and the old people turned out, Tom, the dutiful son-in-law, not only refused to pay up, but he also refused to even harbor his wife's parents.

There was still a mystery about the loan of the money, but neither Mrs. Marlowe nor Samantha dared to question their husbands, and there was not a scrap of paper to prove the transaction.

"Ef Marion wuz here, she'd sift this thing tew the bottom," thought poor, weak Mrs. Marlowe, as she sat and wept, and then for, perhaps, the first time in her life, she turned and bitterly berated her husband.

"Yew've done it all, Joshuy!" she said, lowering her apron. "Yew tied Samanthy hand and foot tew the stingiest critter this side er Jordan, an', what's more, yew've driv both Marion and Dollie from their own father's door—yew've done it, an' some day yew'll answer fer it, Joshuy!"

Her husband paused in his nervous pacing, and stared at her wonderingly. There was a red flush of shame creeping over his wrinkled forehead.

"I've never said it before, being I ain't dared, but I'll say it now ef yew kill me, Joshuy Marlowe! I'm tew full tew keep still! I jest can't, an' that's all there is about

it! Yew've been tew hard on yewr own flesh an' blood, an' yew've been tew hard on me—an' we air goin' tew the Poor Farm as a jedgement upon us—yew fer bein' so hard, an' me fer keepin' still an' mindin' ye!"

Before such a flood of honest condemnation, Joshua Marlowe stood silent; he had not dreamed that his wife harbored such bitterness toward him.

With hardly a pause for breath, she went on speaking, rolling the corners of her apron in both hands and rocking her body back and forth in the torrent of her misery.

"Ef it warn't fer yewr hardness, they would be here now, Joshuy—Samanthy, Marion an' Dollie! But yew turned 'em out! Yew did, Joshuy Marlowe! Yew giv Samanthy tew Tom an' disowned poor Dollie, an' yew'd a-turned Marion out ef yew'd a-dared, but yew dassent! That's one of yewr children that wasn't afeard of yew, Joshuy! Oh, Marion! Marion! I wish yew wuz here this minute!"

The poor woman clasped her hands over her face and began weeping again, while Joshua Marlowe stood like one transfixed, staring grimly at her.

There was a light step on the snow outside, but neither of them heard it. The next second the door flew open and a beautiful girl stood upon the threshold, her eyes flashing like diamonds as their glance fell upon the weeping woman.

"Mother! Mother! I have come back!" cried a sweet, young voice.

The poor woman dropped her apron and gave a scream of joy.

"Oh, Marion! Thank God! It is my darter Marion!"

CHAPTER II.

PAYING OFF THE MORTGAGE.

Without even noticing her father, Marion Marlowe crossed the room to her mother's side, and for just a moment mother and daughter wept together.

Joshua Marlowe stared at her silently. He could hardly believe his eyes. Was this beautiful, stylishly dressed girl his daughter Marion?

After her burst of tears was over, Marion dried her eyes. It was not her nature to waste much time in weeping.

"Why didn't you answer our letters, mother—Dollie's and mine?" she asked, and then answered her own question without waiting for her mother.

"I suppose father would not let you," she said, with some scorn, "and of course you were too scared to dream of disobeying him! It doesn't seem possible that a woman could be so weak, but I forgive you, mother. I know he would only have made your life miserable for you."

"Yew air tew hard on me, Marion," said her father, faintly. He had always stood a little in fear of his daughter Marion.

The girl sprang to her feet and faced him, her cheeks flaming with indignation.

"No, I'm not, father!" she said, hotly. "I am not hard enough on you! You have broken up your own family and you ought to be ashamed of it!"

"Did I send Dollie away?" asked the farmer, flaring up a little. "Did I make her run away with that scapegrace, Lawson?"

"No, you didn't do that, father," said Marion, sadly, "but you condemned and disowned her as soon as she was gone, when you might have known that Dollie was innocent."

"Waal, any father would hev done the same, I reck'n," said the old man, lamely, "but ef I did wrong, I'm a-gittin' paid fer it, there's no use denyin' that, Marion."

His mood had softened and his lips were twitching suspiciously.

As Marion looked at him she seemed suddenly to realize how old and worn he was.

and in an instant her heart was bleeding for him.

"Father! Father!" she cried, going over to him as he sank upon a chair and putting her hand almost tenderly upon his shoulder. "You have been hard with us all, father; but we will forgive you! Just say that you love us, and that in future you will be more kind."

"It's tew late, Marion," cried the old man, huskily. "There's no home fer yew tew come back tew now, so it don't make no diff'rence about your old father! We air goin' tew the Poor Farm, yewr mother an' me, an' I guess she's right—she sez it's jedgement upon us!"

Marion Marlowe's lips trembled, but only with a smile. Her eyes shone through her tears as she gazed steadily at her father.

There was something she must know before she told them the truth about the errand that had brought her back to the mortgaged homestead.

"Father," she began, sternly, "there is something I must know! If you refuse to tell me, I will never forgive you! What scrape was Samantha's husband in when you loaned him that five hundred dollars? Tell me the actual truth, father, for I am determined to know it."

Deacon Marlowe raised his head with the old, stubborn motion that his wife and daughter knew so well, but one look at Marion's face made his glance waver considerably.

"I can't tell yew—it's Tom's secret," he began, but Marion interrupted him.

"You must tell me," she said, firmly, "or I will employ a detective to find out for me."

Deacon Marlowe's jaw dropped and his cheeks became almost ashen in color. The word detective to his country ears was synonymous with everything that meant diabolical cleverness.

"Yew wouldn't dew that!" he began, and stopped. There was something in Marion's eyes that told him plainly that she would do it.

"Waal, I'll tell ef I must," he muttered at last, "an', after all, I don't much keer, fer Tom's behaved mighty mean tew me. I let him hev the money when he went tew New York that time, an' I reckon he lost it in some of them hocus-pocus games—I don't know what they call 'em, it's 'bunco,' or sumthin'! Anyhow, he lost the money, an' come home with a satchel full of worthless green paper, an' it's nat'ral thet neither on us wanted tew say much about it, excep' I had tew tell Sile, 'cause he took the mor'gage."

Mrs. Marlowe stared at her husband in breathless interest while he was talking. In the height of her indignation she had never dreamed that he was such a sinner.

As for Marion, her first thought was one of disgust; then, the picture of her gawky brother-in-law being "buncoed" by sharpers rose before her mental vision, and, in spite of herself, she burst out laughing.

"So you were a 'green goods' victim, dad!" she cried, hysterically. "You thought, by mortgaging the farm, you'd get rich in a minute! Oh, it's no wonder that city people think we country folks are green! That's why they never lose a chance of imposing upon us!"

"Waal, it's did, an' thet's all there is about it," said her father, dolefully, "an' it's me an' yewr mother thet's got ter bear the brunt. Yew an' Dollie air free, an' yew look prosperous, Marion."

The old man was weakening very rapidly now. He was fast becoming meek and submissive in his manner.

"We've had an awful struggle," was Marion's slow answer. "We've been without money and almost without friends, but Dollie has got a position as typewriter in view, and when I get back I'm to be a nurse. I've got

a letter in my pocket this minute accepting my application."

Her parents stared at her curiously, so Marion went on. She was glad to see that they took an interest in what she was telling them.

"Yes, I applied for a dozen or more positions during the first few weeks I was in New York, and this morning, just as I was coming away, I got my first acceptance. I'm to go to Charity Hospital, on Blackwell's Island, as soon as I go back, and I'm just crazy to begin, for I know I will like nursing."

"But I tho't yew wanted to be a singer," said her father, a little vaguely. "Yew've got a bootiful voice, Marion, it's a pity yew can't use it."

Marion smiled at these words of praise from her father, but did not show by a look that she thought them surprising.

"I sang one night in a concert hall," she said, laughing. "I had no idea what the place was like before I sang, or I would never have done it; but I guess it didn't hurt me, and I made a hundred dollars."

"What!" cried her father and mother, in one breath.

Marion nodded her head in a knowing manner.

"They offered me that every night if I would sing," she said, proudly; "but it was a drinking place, and I wouldn't do it."

Deacon Marlowe was still staring at her as though he could not believe his senses. Such tales as this set his old brain to spinning.

"Everything that is wicked pays well in New York," said Marion, sadly; "but it's another thing when you are honest and want to live decently."

Mrs. Marlowe began weeping again, this time very quietly.

"Tew think what we have come tew," she moaned, behind her apron. "Our two daughters in a big, wicked city a-tryin' tew earn their livin', an' yew an' me, Joshuy, a-goin' tew leave the old home an' go tew the Poor Farm, an' it's all on account of yewr hardness an' overbearin'—it's all yewr fault, Joshuy!"

Marion stopped her before she could go any farther.

"See here, mother," she said, brightly, "things ain't quite so bad as you think! In fact, what do you suppose I've come back for, if it isn't to help you?"

"What, yew help a father that's been so hard on yew!" sobbed the woman.

"Yew come back to help me, Marion?" gasped her astonished father.

Marion slowly drew a roll of bills from the purse in her hand and laid it on her mother's lap before she answered.

"You've been hard on us, father, but we forgive you," she said, gently. "I saved a little girl's life in New York a day or two ago, and her mother was so grateful that she rewarded me handsomely. There's five hundred dollars to pay off the mortgage, father, and all I want you to say is that you forgive your little Dollie!"

There was a noble light shining from Marion's eyes. As the old farmer looked up at her he burst out crying.

CHAPTER III.

A POOR WIFE'S DETERMINATION.

It was almost train time when Marion left her father and mother, now radiantly happy in the little farmhouse kitchen. As she walked briskly along the rough, frozen road to the station the young girl's face was fairly glowing with pleasure. She had saved her sister Dollie, and now she had saved the old home. She could hardly believe it seemed possible that she was still Marion Marlowe.

"Just a simple little country girl," she whispered to herself. "Why, only a few months ago I was driving the cows down this very road and wearing a calico dress and a ging-

ham sunbonnet." She looked down at her neat cloth dress and her soft fur collar and muff, and a smile of content crossed her beautiful features.

"It has been a hard struggle, but I am sure it is nearly over now!" she sighed. "Oh, I shall win fame and fortune yet, I feel sure that I shall! All it needs is the three P's—'patience, pluck and perseverance.'"

She was just passing the gate of an old red farmhouse now, and her eyes wandered a little curiously over the familiar premises.

"Silas Johnson's farm," she said, aloud. "Oh, I wonder if he is kind to the poor, unfortunate girl that he married!"

Almost as if in answer, a young girl came running down the path. Marion recognized her at once. It was Sallie Green, her old playmate.

"Oh, Marion! Marion! How do you do!" cried Sallie. "I knew you in a minute in spite of your lookin' so stylish!"

Marion put her arms around the girl and kissed her tenderly.

Sallie was pale and thin, and even homelier than ever.

"Oh, Marion! This life is awful!" she said, as soon as she could speak. "It is killing me to live with Sile! You have no idea how cross he is, now that he's got me where he can boss me!"

"But don't let him 'boss' you!" said the young girl, quickly. "Have some will of your own, Sallie, and make him respect it!"

"Oh, I can't! I can't!" sobbed Sallie dolefully. "He'd kill me, I believe, he's so almighty spiteful! He wasn't so bad at first, but it's awful now. Why, sometimes, Marion, I believe he just hates me!"

"It's dreadful!" said Marion; "but I don't see how you can help it. You were weak and foolish enough to marry him, and now you'll have to suffer forever unless you can summon up the courage to rise above it."

"I'll run away, that's what I'll do," said Sallie, sullenly. "I'll run away like Dollie did and go to the city."

"Hush!" said Marion, sharply. "You must not say that, Sallie! Dollie did not run away of her own free will. She was hypnotized and abducted by the fellow Lawson! Oh, you have no idea what a terrible experience she had; but I rescued her, and now she has a position. She is to be typewriter in a lawyer's office."

Poor Sallie Johnson looked at her in perfect bewilderment.

"Couldn't I do that?" she asked, rather stupidly.

"It requires a great deal of practice," said Marion, kindly. "I am afraid you would not have time to learn, even if you had a machine; but I must hurry, Sallie, it is time I was at the station."

Sallie's eyes were full of tears as Marion kissed her.

"I'll run away some day, you can be sure of it, Marion," she repeated. "I jest hate Silas Johnson, and I won't stand him much longer! I'll either kill myself or run away to the city."

"Don't! Don't!" was all that Marion had time to say. "Try to bear it, Sallie. Perhaps things will get better."

There was a distant shriek of an engine whistle, and Marion fled down the street. It was the last train to the city, and she had to catch it or remain in Hickorytown until another day.

Just as she reached the little station a burly form confronted her, and the coarse voice of Matt Jenkins, the keeper of the Hickorytown Poor Farm, growled a word of greeting.

"Been up to visit the old folks, I s'pose," he said, sneeringly. "Waal, it's well you came now, fer they won't be long at the homestead. They 'll be a-boardin' with me at the Poor Farm in a week or so."

"Are you sure?" asked Marion, coldly, as she turned away from him.

"Waal, five hundred-dollar bills don't grow on bushes," he said, sneeringly, "an' if Sile Johnson don't get his money, he'll turn 'em out the first day of Janooary."

"Silas Johnson is a brute!" said Marion, sharply.

" 'Tain't sweetened his nature any tew marry Sal," said Matt Jenkins, coarsely, "fer, with all her shortcomin's, he'd ruther hev married Dollie."

Marion turned her back on him without a word. The train was approaching, she could see the headlight in the distance.

"Bert Jackson got killed—s'pose yew heerd of it," said Jenkins, in her ear. "I reckin he got tew smart with them cable cars—thet's usually the end of country boys and gals thet think they're smart enough tew git on in the city."

"Bert was the smartest boy that the Poor Farm ever held," said Marion, suddenly, turning square around. "I helped him to run away from the Poor Farm that night, and I only wish that I could help them all to get away from your cruel treatment, Matt Jenkins."

"Bert wouldn't hev been killed if he'd stayed at the farm," was the answer; "fer I ain't so good ter my boys—I only half kill 'em."

Marion sprang aboard of the train almost before it stopped, and as she took her seat she was shaking with laughter.

"Wouldn't he be mad if he knew the truth," she was thinking. "Why, if Matt Jenkins knew that Bert was alive and in a good position, I believe he'd be so mad that he would chew nails for a fortnight."

A ripple of laughter flowed from Marion's lips. She was so amused at her thoughts that she entirely forgot her surroundings.

"By Jove! But that's a pretty girl!" said a low voice just behind her. Marion sobered instantly, but did not turn around. She knew that the gentleman who had spoken did not intend that she should hear him.

CHAPTER IV.

A SERIOUS MATCHMAKER.

When Marion alighted from her train at the Grand Central Depot it was almost midnight, but she was not frightened a particle.

"It doesn't seem much like the first time I came," she said to the gentleman and lady who sat just behind her and who had been talking to her pleasantly during the last part of the journey.

"How so?" asked the gentleman, with an interested look.

"Why, I was as green as grass," said Marion, laughing. "I had on a homespun frock and a simple little straw hat, and it was my very first glimpse of a real city. You can't imagine how lonesome I felt. And then, do you know, I did not have a friend to meet me, while to-night my sister will be here as well as a dear friend who lives with us."

"Do tell us your name," said the lady, as they walked slowly down the platform in the long line of passengers.

"Marion Marlowe," said the young girl, promptly, "and here is my address," she said, handing her a slip of paper; "but after Monday I shall be on Blackwell's Island. I am going there as a nurse—'on probation,' of course— at Charity Hospital."

"Then I may see you again, because I go there often," said the lady, quickly. "My name is Mrs. Brookes, and I am a member of a mission that visits the Island regularly."

"And as I am to be a physician, I may see you, too," said the gentleman, smiling. "I am Reginald Brookes, a student at the 'P. and S.' This lady is my mother, and at present I am a bachelor."

Both ladies laughed, and they all shook hands.

The next moment Marion spied Dollie and her friend, Miss Allyn, and the three girls were soon together.

"Oh, we've found the cunningest little flat you ever saw, Marion," said Dollie, as the girls were disrobing in their room a little ater, "and Miss Allyn and I are to keep house together, and there's to be a bed for you whenever you can get away from the Island."

"It's a hard place to get away from," said Miss Allyn, smiling; "but as you are only to go up for three months, Marion, I suppose there's some use in keeping a bed for you."

"Oh, I hope I'll stay longer than that," laughed Marion. "Why, I'd hate to be sent away when my probationary term was over. I'd almost be tempted to commit some crime that would send me back——"

Miss Allyn was a newspaper reporter who had been their dearest friend ever since the girls began their search for work in the big city. She was not as beautiful as the two country girls, but she made up in wisdom what she lacked in beauty.

"You are our encyclopedia, directory, almanac and family guide," Marion had told her, but Miss Allyn was too modest to admit her worth. She was one of the few who could do favors without becoming obtrusively patronizing. Dollie Marlowe was eager to hear about her sister's visit to their parents, and her blue eyes filled with tears as Marion told them all about it, for in spite of her father's hardness, and her mother's weakness, she was still their child and loved her parents dearly.

When Marion told them of poor Sallie, Dollie was terribly grieved. She sympathized so deeply with the girl that she became almost hysterical.

"I suppose that is exactly the way Silc would have treated me if I had married him," she cried, with her blue eyes blazing. "Oh, Marion, if Sallie had only had a sister like you, she would never have been weak enough to marry Silas!"

"Sallie was a poor, foolish girl," said Marion, sadly, "and for that very reason Silas abuses her now."

"I think a girl is a fool to marry a man she doesn't love," said Miss Allyn, sharply, "partieularly when he has no money and she doesn't even respect him!"

"So do I," said Marion, stoutly, "but Sallie did not know any better. She's just like dozens of other women—she has never done any thinking. Why, Alma, some of the women in the country are a different order of beings from you city women. They think that marrying is the only end and aim of existence."

"Poor things! I pity them, and I despise them, too," said Miss Allyn, sadly. "There is no excuse for such reasoning at this stage of the world's progress. There are so many fields of usefulness for a woman to-day."

"Well, I am glad that Dollie and I are safely out of the rut," said Marion, thankfully. "We've got a chance to develop and see something of the world before we marry and settle down."

"Oh, but I'm going to marry some day," said Dollie, merrily, as she clambered into bed and placed her pretty plump arms above her head. "Ralph says he won't wait very long after he is able to support me."

"I'll have to scold Ralph a little," said Marion, pinching her sister's dimpled arm as it lay on the pillow. "He must not be in such a hurry to rob me of my sister, not that I' blame him a bit, do you?" she added, laughing.

"Not a bit," said Miss Allyn, quickly. "I'm half in love with her myself. Still, I'd rather she'd marry a millionaire, and she could do it just as easily. Ralph Moore is all right, but he's too poor for Dollie."

"Oh, Miss Allyn!" cried both girls in half

serious horror. "Who ever would have dreamed of you harboring such sentiments?"

"Well, I've got 'em, and I might as well be honest," was the answer. "Dollie's too pretty to have to spend her life in a poor man's home. I want to see diamonds in her golden hair and fine lace on those white shoulders, and I don't see why she can't love a rich man as well as a poor one."

"If she could it would be all right, and I would agree with you," said Marion, thoughtfully.

"Well, I'll never love any one but Ralph," said Dollie, stoutly, "and I don't care if he is poor. It just makes me love him still the harder."

"You are a brave little kitten," said Marion, smoothing the golden hair, "but what is it, Alma, you look so terribly serious?"

Miss Allyn was just raising her hand to turn off the gas for the girls before going to her own room, but she waited long enough to make a candid statement.

"I know a young man that would make a lovely husband for one of you girls," she said, slowly. "He's an only child, and he's as rich as Crœsus."

"Who is he?" asked Marion, half rising on her pillow.

Miss Allyn turned off the gas before she answered.

"His name is Reginald Brookes, and he is a medical student. He's exactly the kind of a man you should marry."

CHAPTER V.

MISS ALLYN'S SECRET.

Marion never quite knew what kept her silent after Miss Allyn had mentioned the name of Reginald Brookes, but she allowed her friend to leave the room without saying a word, although she had news that would have interested both of her companions greatly.

"I am surprised that she did not see him at the depot," she thought, as she lay silently beside Dollie, "but I guess they left too quickly."

For an hour after that Marion's mind wandered restlessly. It had been an exciting day as well as a painful one. She rehearsed over and over the scene in the old kitchen—her parents' grief when she first saw them and their rejoicing later.

The glimpse of the old home had stirred memories of her childhood, but it had also brought back all the old loathing for country life and made her wondrously contented with her present surroundings.

"Poor Sallie! How I pity her!" she exclaimed, then listened breathlessly to see if she had awakened Dollie.

"The dear child! How happy she is in her love for Ralph!" she mused. "Well, if she loves him and he is kind to her, what does it matter? After all, it is one's happiness that is to be considered first. Oh, I wonder if I shall ever be really and truly happy?" Then, strangely enough, two faces appeared suddenly before her mind. They were both handsome, both young, and both fired with manly purpose, and peculiarly enough, they were both of men who possessed great riches.

The first picture was that of a tall young man, with dark, trusting eyes and a tender smile that was almost irresistible.

The other was of a blonde, with bright, laughing blue eyes, yet with a frankness and alertness of expression which won one's confidence immediately.

The first picture was that of an old friend who was now abroad—Mr. Archibald Ray, the young man who had aided her in her search for Dollie. The other was that of Reginald Brookes, the medical student—the one whom her friend, Miss Allyn, had said was just the kind of a man that she should marry.

When the girls awoke the next morning they were as happy as larks. There was so much to be talked over in regard to their plans for the future.

Miss Allyn went downtown to her work, early, as usual, but she astonished the girls by coming in at noon and bringing a tall, dark gentleman with her.

"My *fiancé*, Mr. Colebrook," she said, with a deep blush. "You must forgive me, girls, but I could not tell you any sooner."

"Oh, how perfectly lovely!" cried Dollie, giving her a hug. "To think that you, too, are in love, and we never even guessed it!"

Marion smiled as cordially as possible as she greeted Mr. Colebrook, but there was something about him that repelled her strangely.

Once before in her life she had experienced the same sensation, and as she thought of it now she could feel herself becoming awkward and embarrassed.

"We are on our way to a matinee," said Miss Allyn, hurriedly, "but I could not resist the temptation of just bringing him in and introducing him."

"We are ever so glad you did," said Dollie, so cordially that Marion's hesitating manner passed unnoticed for the time.

Miss Allyn's every expression spoke of confidence in her lover. She looked at him shyly, but with such trust in her glance that to Marion she hardly seemed like the same little woman.

"How she does love him!" cried Dolly, the moment they had gone.

Marion still said nothing, but bit her lips savagely. She was wondering why her friend's *fiancé* should have pressed her hand so tenderly when he said good-by at parting.

"What's the matter, Marion? You look so glum!" said Dollie, after a minute. She had been dusting the room, while Marion put the dressing case in order.

"I don't like that man, that Mr. Colebrook," said Marion, slowly. "I hope I may be wrong, but I don't trust him, Dollie."

Dollie dropped her duster and gave a little cry. "Oh, Marion, don't say that!" she exclaimed. "You are so keen in your intuitions, and read people so cleverly that I shall begin this moment to tremble for Alma."

"Well, I hope I am mistaken," was Marion's answer. "But, nevertheless, I shall keep an eye on him whenever I can, for I have never felt such a dreadful feeling at sight of a person unless there was something about them that wasn't trustworthy."

"I know," said Dollie, sadly, "you felt that way about Mr. Lawson. Oh, if you had only acted upon your first impulse with our rascally boarder I might never have fallen into his clutches, Marion."

"I hope this fellow isn't a hypnotist like Mr. Lawson," said Marion, slowly, "but there's one thing sure—he has cast a spell over Miss Allyn. He's made her love him, and I call that wonderful."

"Do you suppose he is rich," said Dollie, remembering Miss Allyn's conversation the evening before.

"Did you notice her eyes?" asked Marion, sagely. "Why, that girl is so much in love with him she doesn't even think about it. I'd be willing to declare she's forgotten that there is such a thing as money—and to think of her reading us such a lecture on finance!"

Both girls laughed heartily, but Marion's smile ended in a sigh.

She was not able to shake off her impression of Mr. Colebrook.

"Hello! Can I come in?" called a voice outside the door.

Dollie opened it quickly and admitted a

youth of seventeen, frank-faced and healthy and brimming over with good nature.

"Oh, Bert, is that you?" called Marion, quickly. "Come right in, so I can tell you all about my visit to the country."

"Have they erected a headstone to my memory in the Poor Farm graveyard yet?" asked the boy, "and is the village of Hickorytown draped in mourning for my decease?"

"No, neither," said Marion, laughing, "but they all think you are dead, Bert. That letter of mine to Matt Jenkins, telling him of your death, was accepted by them all, in spite of the made-up signature."

"You did me a big favor when you wrote that letter, Marion," said Bert, quickly, "and I'll never forget it if I live to be a hundred; but see here, I've got some news for you that will make your eyes stick out! There is a personal in the paper for Ila de Parloa, the singer."

He held out a scrap of paper toward Marion as he spoke, and the girl's face flushed and paled alternately as she read it.

"A manager of some theatrical troupe wants my address," she said to Dollie. "He tried to get it from the manager of that concert hall where I sang, but old Vandergrift was so mad that he wouldn't give it to him."

"I'll bet there's lots of them that want you, and that will give you a good price, too, Marion," said Bert Jackson, eagerly. "If you say so, I'll look this up and see what there is in it."

"Wait a minute—let me think," said the fair girl, slowly; then she shook her head with a decided motion. "No, I will not listen to their offers at present," she said, emphatically. "I am to enter Charity Hospital as a nurse next Monday. It is a noble profession, and I feel, some way, that I am called to it."

CHAPTER VI.

TESTING A LOVER.

Marion had ample opportunity to observe George Colebrook in the next two days, for Miss Allyn was furnishing her little flat, and her *fiancé* was assiduous in his attentions to her.

"I'm a little puzzled about George," Miss Allyn confided to Marion as they were busily arranging and rearranging the new furniture.

Dollie was out in the little kitchen making some tea, so Marion knew instinctively that Miss Allyn had something on her mind that she did not wish any one else to know about. She looked at her inquiringly, and with so much sympathy in her face that Alma Allyn stopped in her work and came over and stood by her.

"You think I'm a fool for being so much in love, don't you, Marion?" she asked, smilingly. "Well, let me tell you how it was; George and I were children together. He wasn't a very good boy, and I suppose I sympathized with him. He was always in some scrape or other, and everybody was down on him. Well, when we grew up there was no one else. George made love to me, and I let him, but then we were too poor to think of marrying. When mother died and I went home to her funeral, I found him there. We had then been separated two years, but had corresponded regularly. Almost immediately after the funeral he asked me to marry him, and I was so utterly lonely that I accepted him thoughtlessly. Not that I didn't love him, Marion, for I did love him dearly. Someway he grew into my life and seems almost a part of it."

"And do you trust him, Alma?" asked Marion, as she paused. "Are you sure that he will treat you right and be a good husband to you?"

Alma Allyn's face clouded a little as she

made her reply. In spite of her great love, she was still able to reason.

"I did trust him when I promised to marry him," she said, slowly, "but something has happened since that is puzzling me, Marion. George is not the same man that he was at mother's funeral."

Marion's lips framed a question that she did not ask. There was no need to ask it, for Miss Allyn was already answering it instinctively.

"He wanted me to marry him as soon as he got back from England, where he had to go on business, he said, and that is why I decided to take this flat with Dollie, but in the last two days he has changed his mind. He is not going to England, yet he says nothing about our marriage."

Marion bit her lips and thought quietly for a moment. She could see that her friend was suffering, and she dreaded to say anything that would add to her sorrow.

"He may be undecided," she said at last, "or perhaps he is planning something different, Alma, but if I were in your place, I would come right out and ask him."

Miss Allyn was a trifle pale when she spoke again, and it was plain to Marion that she had doubts of her lover.

"If I thought he did not love me, I would release him at once," she said, quietly, "but he has professed to love me for years, so why should I doubt him?"

"There is no reason why you should," said Marion, firmly. "It is very probable that he is just waiting for something, some business matter or affair of some kind before he says anything."

"Well, I hope it will soon be settled, for this suspense is mighty unpleasant, I can tell you," said Miss Allyn, smiling a little. "Why, for the first time in my life, Marion, I'm not fit to attend to business."

"Love affairs are dreadful things," said Marion, trying to laugh it over. "I'm so glad that up to date I have never been affected."

"Oh, I'm not so sure," said Miss Allyn, more gayly. "You were pretty sweet on Mr. Ray, and you may as well own it, and, by the way, is he coming back to this country ever?" she asked.

"They are to sail next week, he and Adele," was the answer, "but I shall be in the hospital then, so I suppose I can't see them."

"Love will find the way," quoted Miss Allyn, slyly. "You can trust that Mr. Ray to find you, Marion."

Dollie entered just then, evidently in a state of great excitement.

"Oh, girls!" she screamed, half crying, "I'm just frightened to death. I've broken my hand glass into a thousand pieces."

"That means seven years of bad luck," said Miss Allyn, laughing; "and a half a dollar to buy a new hand glass."

"Never mind, Dollie," said Marion, who was not at all superstitious. "You'll be earning six dollars a week after this, so it won't take long to buy the new glass."

"Oh, but I'm to save every penny to buy my trousseau," said Dollie, brightening. "You keep forgetting, Marion, that I'm going to be married."

"There is little danger of her forgetting it while you are around, Dimples," said Miss Allyn, laughing. "You take pains to remind her of it every fifteen minutes."

"Here comes Mr. Colebrook," was Dollie's whispered reply. "Quick, come out in the kitchen with me, Marion, so we won't interrupt the lovers."

"Nonsense!" cried Miss Allyn, as she darted toward the kitchen. "I'll go out there myself and see if he misses me."

Dollie followed her into the kitchen of the

little flat and closed the door softly, leaving Marion alone in their pretty parlor.

"Oh, all alone, Miss Marlowe," was Mr. Colebrook's greeting. "Well, for once in my life I am deucedly lucky."

Marion looked up in surprise, but controlled her feelings wonderfully. It had popped into her head to test her friend's lover a little.

"Why do you think yourself lucky in finding me alone," she asked, archly, as she went on arranging the furniture.

"Because you are the sweetest girl that I ever met," was the astonishing reply, "and I am lucky in having a chance to say so."

For a moment Marion could hardly believe her ears; then a great feeling of pity for Miss Allyn swept through her every fibre.

Almost involuntarily she glanced toward the kitchen door, but it was tightly closed, so she breathed a little more freely.

"Miss Marlowe—Marion," cried Mr. Colebrook, suddenly, "have you no eyes to see how much I admire you? Why, I've been crazy with admiration ever since I met you. You are as beautiful as a saint, and I am desperately in love with you."

Poor Marion's breath came with a little gasp now. It was almost impossible for a girl with her honest nature to grasp such a situation. Here was her best friend's betrothed husband actually making love to her. He had the open assurance to tell her that he loved her.

As she stood almost paralyzed by her emotions, he seized her hand in both his own, and before she could stop him he had kissed it fervently.

Suddenly one word issued from the pale girl's lips.

"Traitor!"

She hissed it out slowly, her tone tense and vibrating.

The fellow drew back as if he had been stung.

The next instant Alma Allyn opened the kitchen door and stepped calmly between them.

CHAPTER VII.

MARION RECEIVES A CALLER.

"Thank you, Marion."

This was all that Miss Allyn said as she paused beside the two, her dearest friend and the man who was her lover. Her face was of a death-like pallor, and her eyes were gleaming, but there was nothing further to tell how terribly she was suffering.

With the utmost coolness she drew the ring from her finger and was about to hand it to him, when she changed her mind suddenly.

"No, I won't give it back. I'll keep it," she said, quietly. "It will be a constant reminder of a man's perfidy. Any time when you want the price of it let me know. You are mean enough to ask for it," she said, with a shrug of her shoulders.

George Colebrook's face was a study for a moment. He looked first at one of the girls and then at the other.

"You had better go," said Miss Allyn, coolly. "You can see that you are out of place. My friends, like myself, despise a traitor."

With a glance of hatred toward Marion, the fellow turned and fled.

The moment he was gone, Miss Allyn dropped heavily on the sofa.

"It has killed her!" cried Dollie, darting to her side.

"She has fainted. Bring some water," was Marion's answer.

"It is all for the best, dear: do try and think so," urged Marion a few minutes later, when Miss Allyn opened her eyes.

Miss Allyn drew herself up slowly and looked around.

"So it is all over, my dream of love," she said, very slowly. "Well, I guess I've got spunk enough to pull me through. Where's that looking-glass, Dollie. I want to smash the pieces."

That was the last the girls heard of Miss Allyn's love affair. Her lover's name was buried in oblivion from that very moment.

If Miss Allyn grieved for him, she did not show it, but, if anything, she became a trifle more sad and pessimistic.

"It would have killed me, I know," Dollie told Marion in confidence. "Why, if Ralph should deceive me, I'd commit suicide, I'm certain."

"Well, then, you'd be a little goose, that's all I've got to say," was Marion's answer. "Why, any one would think to hear you, Dollie, that Ralph was the only man in the world worth having."

"Sometimes I think he is," said Dollie, complacently. Her faith in her lover was something that passed comprehension.

That evening both Dollie and Miss Allyn went out, Dollie with her lover and Miss Allyn on business. As Marion seated herself in a big arm-chair in the semi-darkness, she looked around their little home with a sigh of genuine pleasure.

"I almost hate to leave it," she said aloud. "It is so sweet, so homelike and so beautifully cosy."

There was a peal of the bell just at that very moment, which was so shrill that it brought her to her feet in a second.

"Our callers are coming early," she thought as she went to look for the door opener, "but everything looks cosy even if we are not all settled."

"I am looking for Miss Marion Marlowe," said a voice on the stairs as Marion stepped out into the hall.

"I have been to her old address and they sent me here. I wonder, if I should find her, if she would be willing to see me?"

Marion's laugh rippled out merrily at this naive request, and she held out her hand cordially to her unexpected caller.

"I am delighted to see you, Dr. Brookes," she said, smiling, "but I am very sorry that both my friend and my sister are absent this evening. They would both have stayed at home if we had known you were coming."

"Oh, I am not so difficult to entertain as all that," was the jolly answer. "One young lady at a time is enough, I find, Miss Marlowe. I am not so piggish as to want a dozen."

"They say there is safety in a multitude," said Marion, slyly. "No danger of falling in love when there are plenty of them. It's the monopoly of one that proves fatal, they tell me."

"So you think falling in love a fatality, do you?" asked the young man, quickly. "Well, if that is the case, I confess that I'm a fatalist."

"It has fatal consequences, I have discovered," said Marion, half sadly, "although I must admit that I speak from observation and not experience."

"A confession that I am glad to hear you make, Miss Marlowe," said her caller almost seriously; "for most of the women that men meet nowadays are either just recovering from some heart malady or at the actual crisis of the disease, or else, what is worse, they have so thoroughly recovered from some violent attack as to render them immune from ever having another."

"Poor things! I pity them," said Marion, laughing. "but I can fancy that none of the three classes would afford very desirable companions. Still, we are all liable to infection of that kind," she added, as she offered him

a chair, "and up to the present time no one has produced a preventive."

"No, nor an antidote," was the answer, in the same serious voice, "but now tell me, Miss Marlowe, about your plans for the future."

He spoke with so much sympathetic interest that Marion did not dream of resenting it; rather, it seemed most natural for her to sit there and tell him all about her plans.

He was to be a physician and she a nurse. They had many hopes and aspirations in common.

The evening passed so quickly that Marion was astonished when at ten o'clock the young man rose to leave her.

"I shall arrange to come over to Charity often," he said at parting. "I know several of the doctors there, so I can do so easily."

"I hope I shall like it," said Marion, soberly. "It seems such a noble profession to be caring for the sick and suffering."

"It is terribly hard work, though," said Mr. Brookes, somewhat discouragingly, "and I wish it was almost any other hospital than Charity."

Marion was about to reply, when she heard Miss Allyn coming up the stairs.

She bit her lips with amusement as she pictured what was about to follow.

She had not told either Miss Allyn or Dollie that she knew this young man, so she was prepared for something like a scene from Miss Allyn.

"Good-night, Miss Marlowe," said young Brookes, holding out his hand.

"Good-night," Marion answered, her lips curving into a smile, "and I do hope you will keep your promise about coming to Charity."

"I will, indeed," said the young man, softly. The next moment he turned and confronted Miss Allyn.

"Miss Allyn! Alma! Is it possible?" he cried in astonishment.

"Hello, Reggie, what the mischief are you doing here?" was the answer.

Then as Miss Allyn caught sight of Marion, she added promptly: "Oh, I see, you are making love to the noblest girl in creation!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A PROPHECY CAME TRUE.

"Well, if you are not a sly one," remarked Miss Allyn, as soon as she and Marion were alone in the little parlor.

Marion indulged in a hearty laugh before she told her how she had met young Brookes and his mother on the train the day she came back from the country.

"Will you take my advice and marry him if he asks you," said Miss Allyn, shortly. "There are not many men like Reginald Brookes, Marion, I can tell you."

"Is he better than Mr. Ray?" asked Marion, jokingly. "I have been trying to answer that question for myself all the evening."

"Poor Mr. Ray! His chances are fading," said Miss Allyn, smiling. "Well, it wouldn't be fair to the absent to praise his rival, so I'll decline the responsibility of answering your question."

"That's just like you, Alma," said Marion, soberly. "You are the most loyal woman that I ever met or heard of."

"Well, I know another that answers to that description," said Miss Allyn, quickly. "Do you want to see her?"

She grasped Marion by the shoulders and whirled her around so that she faced the mirror directly over the mantel.

Marion blushed and was about to speak, when Dollie tapped on the door. Her lover, Ralph Moore, was with her and begged the girls to let him come in a minute.

"Come right in, Brother Ralph," said Marion, teasingly. "Come in and see Dollie's new home, and I'll introduce you to Miss Allyn."

Ralph Moore was a handsome fellow, with charming manners, and since his engagement to Dollie he was just like a big brother to Marion.

"It's very pretty," he said, admiringly. "I hope I'll soon be able to furnish as pretty a one for Dollie."

"What, and take her away from me?" asked Miss Allyn, quickly. "Well, that settles it, Mr. Moore. You can consider me your sworn enemy."

"Oh, you'll have to live with us," retorted Dollie. "We'll take a bigger flat and all live together."

"No, thanks," said Miss Allyn, laughing; "none of that for me. Do you suppose I could stand it to see you forever spooning?"

After a laugh at this remark, Mr. Moore took his departure, boldly kissing his sweetheart in the tenderest manner.

"Good-by, Ralph," said Marion. "I will not see you again. I have an engagement to-morrow night, and Monday I go to the Island."

"Well, good luck, Sister Marion," said Ralph, taking her hand; then he turned toward Dollie with a pleading expression.

"Yes, you can kiss her, seeing it's Marion," said Dollie, laughing, "but just look out for yourself, sir. If I ever catch you kissing any other girl, why, I'd just scratch your eyes out, even if I do love you."

"I won't take any chances," said Ralph, in mock terror; then he kissed Marion goodby and said good night to Miss Allyn.

"A mighty fine fellow," was Miss Allyn's comment.

"A noble young man," was Marion's answer. "We can never forget how loyally he has defended us."

Miss Allyn knew what she meant, and nodded her head. She had heard the story of Ralph Moore's strange deed, how he had appropriated a jewel from his aunt and pawned it to keep the girls from starvation.

"I'd trust a man like that anywhere," she said, slowly, "for no matter what he did, no one would suffer by it; he would look at both sides of a brook before he jumped it."

The girls were soon in bed and sound asleep. They had had a tiresome day, but would have been absolutely happy had not the unfaithfulness of Miss Allyn's lover cast a cloud upon their thoughts.

Early Monday morning Marion said goodby to her friend and to her sister, for Miss Allyn and Dollie were going down town together, as it was Dollie's first day of service as a typewriter.

At ten o'clock Marion started out. Her boat left at eleven from the East Twenty-sixth street dock, and she had a permit in her pocket which the clerk at Charity Hospital had sent her.

It was to be a strange experience, and Marion trembled a little. Some way she dreaded to see the sights that she was about to encounter.

"There are prisoners and crazy people of all kinds up there," she whispered to herself. "I just dread to face such misery, and yet some one has to do it."

She had packed her little trunk and sent it on before her, so now she had nothing but a handbag to carry, and she quite enjoyed the ride from Harlem in the elevated train.

Marion had just reached the street from the elevated station, when the sharp clang of a bell startled her from her reflections.

There was a large group of people about half way down the block, and in an instant an ambulance came dashing around the corner.

"A woman either sick or drunk," said somebody near her.

Marion walked along slowly, so as not to get in the crowd which, like all New York crowds, seemed to spring right up through the sidewalk.

"Get out of the way there, will you!" shouted a burly policeman, as he rushed up. "Stand back there and give the doctor a chance. Move on, I say, or I'll club the heads off'n you!"

Marion shrank back a little, but she was the only one. The others swarmed about the ambulance as though the officer had not spoken.

In the twinkling of an eye the ambulance swung around and a physician in uniform sprang to the curbing.

The crowd fell back a little when the officer resorted to vigorous measures, and the next moment Marion caught sight of a woman lying on the sidewalk, with her head actually falling over the curb into the gutter.

"Run out the stretcher," ordered the physician as another officer arrived on the scene. He picked the woman up bodily and laid her on the floor of the ambulance, which was fitted with a mattress and blankets.

A break in the crowd enabled her to see clearly. In a second she was staring hard, her breath almost choking her.

There was something familiar about the woman's dress, which was of a plain, dark homespun, so common in the country.

The next moment Marion had pressed forward until she obtained a clear view of the poor creature's face, and then a cry burst from her lips that made the crowd stare at her.

"It is Sallie—Sallie Green!" she cried hysterically.

The ambulance bell clanged and there was a swaying of the crowd. Before she could collect her senses the ambulance dashed off, carrying Silas Johnson's wretched wife to a cot in Bellevue Hospital.

Sallie had kept her word—she had "run away to the big city."

CHAPTER IX.

MARION MEETS A MISSIONARY.

Marion made her way down to the dock, feeling almost dazed at what she had seen. She was endeavoring to decide what was her duty in the matter.

She heard the clang of the bell as the ambulance dashed into Bellevue Hospital yard, but she was too late to see more, for the great gate closed as she reached it.

She took her permit from her pocket and glanced at it eagerly. It was dated, so she knew she must use it that day, and, furthermore, it was now five minutes of eleven, so there was no time to be spent in helping Sallie.

"They'll take good care of her, I am sure," she whispered to herself, "and, anyway, I can write to Silas as soon as I get up there. He can't be so bad but what he'll come and get her."

In less than five minutes she was on the dock, and here for a moment Marion almost forgot poor Sallie. There were several policemen standing around, as if waiting for something, and on the deck of the *Thomas Brennan*, the ferryboat that was to convey her to Blackwell's Island, and which was moored to the dock, she could see several more men in blue uniforms waiting.

As soon as Marion passed the dock entrance an officer came up to her. Marion handed him her permit and he turned and nodded to the captain.

"Go right on deck, miss. The prisoners will stay down below," he said, kindly, as he led Marion over and helped her down the gangplank.

Marion glanced around the boat, which

looked anything but attractive, and was soon on the deck as the officer had directed her.

Just as she reached it a great covered wagon came lumbering down to the dock.

"Here she comes at last! Here's the 'Black Maria!'" cried the captain; then he gave some orders and at once all was activity.

Marion's eyes were widely opened when she saw what followed, for there were fourteen prisoners in the "Black Maria," two of the worst ones being handcuffed together.

In the quickest possible manner they were driven on to the boat, a guard standing at each side of the gangplank to keep them from jumping overboard.

As soon as they were all on, the order was given to start, and the boat was soon ploughing its way up the East River and among the craft that dotted the water.

"Is this a strange sight for you, miss?" asked a voice behind Marion.

The young girl turned quickly and confronted an elderly woman.

"It is, indeed," said Marion promptly, "and it is about the saddest sight that I ever dreamed of," she added.

"Are you a nurse?" asked the woman again in a courteous manner.

"Not yet," answered Marion, "but I am accepted on probation. I am on my way to the Charity Hospital."

The woman looked at her kindly, but Marion's gaze was wandering. She was trying to realize her extraordinary surroundings.

"Those are 'ten-day men,' said the woman, as she saw Marion staring at two of the deck hands on the steamer. "In other words, they have been sent up for ten days and are allowed to work on the boat."

Marion opened her eyes in absolute surprise. She had never before heard of such an arrangement.

"Why, that is ever so much better than keeping them shut up," she said, quickly. "Poor fellows! I am sorry for them. They haven't all got bad faces."

"And they are not all bad; now," said the woman again. "I can assure you, I have many good friends among the prisoners."

Marion turned and looked at her with interest. She seemed to be both a refined and an intelligent person.

"I am a Bible reader," said the woman, smiling. "I visit some of the islands every day, and my principal duty is to read the Bible to the prisoners."

Marion's smile changed instantly into an expression of wonderment.

"Do they like that, madam?" she asked, a little bluntly.

"Some of them do," said the woman, with a peculiar laugh, "but some are very hardened. I can hardly get them to listen."

"Well, I don't wonder," said the girl, with a heavy sigh. "I should think that some parts of the Bible would make them feel decidedly uncomfortable. Of course, there are many classes of criminals," she added, quickly. "There are those who sin through weakness and those who are deliberately vicious. Then, of course, there are the others who sin almost from necessity."

The woman looked at her in a little surprise. She had not expected so young a girl to be so serious on this subject.

"The good Word comforts each of these classes," was her only answer. "If they are truly sorry they will be forgiven."

Marion's next remark showed that she was thinking more than listening.

"Society is all to blame," she said, very soberly. "If conditions were right, there would be very few criminals, and none, I am sure, of the last class I mentioned. If you could only read the Bible to our lawmakers, madam, and to the rich men and women who are mighty and all powerful"

The woman smiled and looked at her curiously.

"Perhaps you are right," she said, after a minute, "but we should rise above conditions and not be slaves to them."

"That is easier said than done," said Marion, sharply. "When a man's strength is deficient he is not to blame for it."

"They should have prayed for strength," said the woman, devoutly, "and at any rate they should not have fallen into sin. It is their own fault that they are here doing penance for their wickedness."

"Well, I am very sorry for them, anyway," replied Marion, quickly, "and I sincerely hope that you are able to comfort them, madam. To me they look like poor creatures who have never had half a chance. No doubt they would all have been honest if they could have earned decent livings."

She turned abruptly on her heel and walked away. Some way, it vexed her to hear this woman blaming the poor creatures.

"Probably she was never hungry or in want in her life," she thought, angrily, "so what can she know of the temptations they have suffered?"

This glimpse of misery was making Marion depressed already. The faces of the men haunted her, they were so pinched and eager.

She wandered across the boat and stood looking over the water, her brain busy with the problems of how to help the poor creatures.

The woman did not come near her and Marion was glad of it. She wanted to be alone and do a little hard thinking.

"I may be wrong in pitying them, but I can't help it," she thought. "I am sure the struggle of life has been too hard for many of them. I suppose that woman thinks I am a heathen, because I did not say I thought they deserved what they were getting."

A light ripple of laughter relieved her over-strained tension and for the next few minutes the woman was forgotten.

Marion watched the prisoners land, with the guards beside them, and then as they marched slowly toward the penitentiary, she left the boat and started for the hospital.

It was all so strange, so almost alarming, this guarding and marching, that for a minute she felt a sense of oppression in her soul. It was as though she were breathing the air of a prison cell rather than the breath of sweet liberty, which was her rightful possession.

CHAPTER X.

MARION'S FIRST WEEK AT CHARITY.

In less than a week Marion began to feel quite at home in the big hospital, whose windows overlooked a scene of magnificence as well as much that was less inspiring.

Strips of clear blue water stretched on both sides of the island, and as Marion listened to the thrilling tales and traditions which have long made Hell Gate a place of blood-curdling interest, she could hardly turn her eyes from the far-famed danger spot. It seemed to enthral her in some spell of enchantment.

The great cities of Brooklyn and New York made a magnificent background to the scene. Spires towered from expensive churches, and at sunset the plate-glass windows of the many noble structures gave back a glow which was almost glorious.

Thus the city's grandeur and luxury was before her eyes, while its misery was in even closer proximity, for was she not caring for its victims, its slaves and its outcasts in the very wards of this isolated building?

"Oh, to think that such wretchedness should exist!" she sighed over and over. "To think that with all the wealth and lux-

nry of New York, these poor, poor creatures should drag out such an existence!"

As Marion passed through the wards, her heart was heavy within her. It was a condition which the simple country girl had never dreamed could exist—a condition which she could by any possibility have imagined, but, nevertheless, one of the saddest, sternest, most reliable facts in the history of the city.

Inside were the sick, the deformed, the crippled. Women whom shame had driven from the sight of the world, others whom care, abuse, over-work and under-pay had reduced to that condition known as invalid vagrancy.

Outside, in the numerous buildings, were other classes—criminals, "crooks," "scapegraces" and prodigals and careworn men and decrepit women—paupers, homeless and penniless at the close of life and dependent upon what some have called a city's "charity."

It took Marion some time to grasp the full horror of the Island. The spot was so beautiful that it made the realization more difficult.

True to her resolve, she had written at once to Silas, and as the hours went by, she consoled herself by thinking that Sallie must be safely at home, unless—and here a thrill of horror would cross her—unless she had died in the hospital before Silas could get the letter.

The thought of poor Sallie made her keenly alive to the sufferings of the unfortunates around her. That one glimpse of Sallie's white face seemed to haunt her continually.

Over and over she marveled at the apparent indifference of the other nurses, and wondered if it were possible that she, too, would become hardened to her surroundings.

"I am afraid I shall become morbid," she said to the head nurse in her ward one day. "I cannot drive the horrors of this Island out of my mind for a minute. It is fortunate for me that you keep me so busy."

Miss Williams smiled sadly. She was a sweet-faced woman.

"You will be obliged to grow indifferent. It is your only safeguard," she said, kindly. "An over-sympathetic nurse is never very successful."

"I shall try not to show my feelings," said Marion, quickly. "I know that would be fatal to success, Miss Williams, but I am almost certain that I can never help feeling."

"Oh, but that is different," was the cordial answer. "A nurse that cannot feel is a mere machine. She will do her work well, and to some patients this will be quite satisfactory, but to others, to the majority, sympathy is more than medicine. An encouraging word, or a kindly interest will heal the soul, which is often more stricken than the body. There is Katie B——," she went on more softly. "Just see how that child hungers for a mother's voice, yet she is a mother herself, the poor unfortunate. A nurse who would be cold to her would lose the child's confidence altogether."

"I understand you perfectly," said Marion, slowly. "A nurse in Charity Hospital has something to do besides make beds and give medicines. She has human hearts to cheer and strengthen. Oh, I hope I may be wise enough not to throw away my opportunity."

"You are doing nobly," said Miss Williams, smiling. "I have seldom seen a 'probationer' take so kindly to her lot. Making beds and cleaning wards is not very pleasant work, but we all had to do it before we could wear strings to our aprons."

Both girls laughed pleasantly at this allusion to future honors, for even Marion had learned that a nurse's highest ambition was to wear an honorable graduate's cap and apron.

"I shall be glad when my probation is ended," said Marion, eagerly. "I do so want to wear the regulation uniform. Of course, I am willing to admit that I don't like to do drudgery, but I remember that all have to start at the beginning, and it won't be long before I can wield the temperature thermometer."

Miss Williams sighed, and her face saddened for a minute.

"You will find that the responsibility has increased wonderfully by that time," she

said, slowly. "Sometimes I wish that I could always have been a 'probationer.'"

The girls were busy in the medicine-room of the ward as they talked. Miss Williams was getting out lint and bandages for a coming operation, while Marion was busy cleaning a number of surgical instruments.

"I feel more like a scullery maid than I do like a nurse," she said, laughing, as she carefully polished some knives and arranged them in the case.

"There's your bell," said Miss Williams, quickly, as she heard a soft tinkle. Marion dropped her cloth and started toward her patient.

"Miss Marlowe!"

Miss Williams raised her voice, but spoke gently and pleasantly.

"Please pick up your cloth and lay it on the table, then move swiftly, but more silently as you go to your patient!"

She smiled as she spoke, and Marion nodded gratefully.

"I see I am much too impulsive," she said, regretfully. "Oh, will I ever learn to discipline my emotions?"

"Of course you will," said Miss Williams, as she passed out of the door. "You'll learn anything that you wish to, Miss Marion Marlowe."

It was Kittie B——— who had rung the bell. She was lying in bed, her face as white as her pillow, with a tiny red-faced infant nestling beside her.

"May I have a drink of water?" she whispered, with a faint smile. "I guess I am feverish—I'm awful thirsty."

"Certainly you shall have it, dear," was Marion's prompt answer. Then it suddenly occurred to her that she had no right to promise anything.

"I'll have to ask Miss Williams first, though, Kittie," she said, quietly; "but I guess there is no doubt but what you can have the water."

It was only a minute before Marion returned with the water, but the request had brought Miss Williams promptly to the bedside.

In a moment the trained nurse was feeling Kittie's pulse. In another minute the temperature thermometer was out, and it was discovered that Kittie had a fever.

"The maternity ward is not the place for fevers," said Miss Williams to Marion when they were out of hearing of the patient. "Put the screen around Kittie's bed and keep her as quiet as possible. If the baby annoys her or she annoys the baby, take it out and put it in the crib beside the bed. I will look at her again in fifteen minutes."

Marion went back to the bed and found Kittie fidgeting. There was a look in her face that frightened Marion somewhat.

She took the baby up and laid it in the crib, then turned to soothe Kittie with a smile and a few encouraging words.

The flush of fever was rising to the sick girl's pale face now, so that even Marion's untrained eye could observe and study the symptoms.

She bathed her brow and moistened her lips, but the fire in the girl's veins seemed to burn hotter and hotter.

An hour later and Miss Williams had called the house physician to the bedside.

Kittie was moaning softly and turning her head from side to side.

"It's a pity we did not know more about her when she came," said Dr. Hall as he turned away. "The girl is in a very dangerous condition."

CHAPTER XI.

SOME SHOCKING INCIDENTS.

The next two days were busy ones for Marion, for she was almost constantly at the bedside of poor, delirious Kittie.

As the girl tossed on her pillow she talked incessantly, so that, bit by bit, Marion learned her sad history, finding that, like herself, the child had been born and bred in the country, but had run away from her home only to find treachery and disgrace in a conscienceless city. The names of "father" and "mother" were constantly on her lips. Then there was another name which she tried to speak, but which seemed always to be choked back by a flood of agony or a torrent of bitter, ill-timed denunciations.

Marion guessed that this name would have meant a revelation. It was doubtless the name of poor Kittie's betrayer, which,

for some reason or other, she could never utter.

A sudden dislike to her own child was the next development of the fever. When she saw its tiny face she screamed and shrieked with rage. It was necessary to remove it from her sight entirely.

"It is a typical case," said Miss Williams to Marion. "You can study the chart as much as you wish. It will not hurt you to learn the tracings, even though you are a 'probationer.'"

On the very next bed to Kittie lay an older woman. She was also a mother and was slowly dying of consumption.

As Kittie moaned and cried, this woman wept silently. In her own dire distress she was consumed with pity.

"Oh, the misery of it all," she sighed, as Marion bent over her. "Bless your dear face, nurse, and may the good God keep you from such wretchedness."

Marion looked upon death for the first time that night, for the poor consumptive died without a sound or struggle.

Try as they would, they could not keep it from Kittie. There was too much to be done, too many to be cared for, to go into any extraordinary effort at secrecy. As the stretcher was carried out with the still, cold figure upon it Kittie almost sprang from her bed and tried to peer over the screen to look at it.

Marion caught her in her arms and pressed her firmly back. The girl was screaming with horror, and as strong as a lioness.

"She is my mother, I tell you!" she shrieked over and over. "I saw her face once. I am sure she is my mother!"

Miss Williams came to Marion's help and together they laid Kittie on her pillow. There were shrieks and groans all over the ward, for Kittie had excited all the other patients.

Marion would have gladly put her fingers in her ears to shut out the sounds, but one glance at Miss Williams' face made her ashamed of her cowardice.

In a few minutes the head nurse and an assistant were moving about the ward—they went from bed to bed, quieting and soothing their patients.

Kittie was lying back exhausted on her pillow now, and as she lay staring at Marion her eyes seemed suddenly to emit a brilliant lustre. Marion was fascinated by the glance and sat staring back mutely. She held one of Kittie's hands and was stroking it absently.

Suddenly Kittie leaned a little toward her and began to mutter. There was a fierce intensity in her manner, as though she had determined to impart something which must be divulged.

Marion divined the poor girl's message at once. It was clear that she was about to speak the forbidden name, and in spite of herself Marion could not help feeling a deep interest in the secret.

Over and over again Kittie struggled to speak distinctly, but her throat seemed parched and her tongue and lips unruly.

Marion held her head and gave her some water, trying with wonderful self-control to lay her back upon her pillow.

"I must! I must!" whispered the poor girl, distinctly. "I must tell it to the world for my baby's sake. You shall know, every one shall know my baby's father."

"Not now, dear," said Marion, soothingly; "another time. Lie down, Kittie, and be calm. You will be better to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" murmured the girl, hoarsely. "To-morrow I shall be dead! To-night I must speak! To-night or never."

Marion saw that she could do nothing, so she leaned sadly over the bed.

"If it will relieve your mind, Kittie, you can whisper it to me softly. I will never tell. It shall always be your secret."

The burning eyes of the sick girl were searching her face, and the claw-like fingers which Marion held twitched and trembled convulsively.

"No, no. I can't speak it," she said at last, "but there is a picture—his picture—in the bosom of my dress; the head nurse has it—ask Miss Williams for it."

She sank back upon her pillow completely exhausted now. There was a change passing over her face that even Marion noticed.

In a second Miss Williams was standing beside the bed

"Poor thing, it will soon be over," she said, sadly; "put the screen around her and go to

Miss H———, Miss Marlowe. She is suffering greatly, and I am too busy."

"What! Leave Kittie now?" whispered Marion in horror.

"She is dead," said Miss Williams, with a quick glance at Kittie. "The living first, Miss Marlowe, the living and suffering."

Marion went mutely across the ward, mastering her grief as she went. In that one short week she had learned to love Kittie.

"It will soon kill me at this rate," she reasoned to herself. "Oh, I must learn not to sympathize so deeply with my patients."

At sunrise the next morning Marion stood by one of the windows of the hospital, looking out upon the water, that glinted and gleamed all around her.

A group of convicts were busy mending a broken spot in the sea-wall, their two guards standing idly by, each armed with a rifle.

"Here is the picture Kittie spoke of," said Miss Williams, coming up to her. "You can look at it, Miss Marlowe, and then you must go to bed. It is not necessary for you to work day and night, even if you are a 'probationer.'"

She slipped a picture into Marion's hand and went away. She was too busy herself to think of sleeping. A great beam of the golden sun fell upon the window panes at that instant and Marion's eyes were slightly dazzled as she looked at the picture.

Then with a stifled cream Marion dropped the bit of pasteboard from her hand.

It was a picture of Reginald Brookes—frank, blue-eyed and handsome!

CHAPTER XII.

A DESPERATE CHANCE.

For a few hours that day Marion remained quietly in her room. She was not expected on duty, and it was fortunate for her that they could spare her.

She had returned the picture of Reginald Brookes without a word to Miss Williams, but the revelation it had brought to her distressed her beyond expression.

"It must be a mistake," she whispered over and over. "The thing is impossible! It is too utterly horrible!"

Then the dying girl's words came back to her distinctly. On her deathbed it was not probable that Kittie would have told a falsehood.

Marion was glad when the batch of letters was handed to her. They would serve to take her mind from this dreadful subject. The first letter was from Dollie, telling of her success as a typewriter.

"I am getting on famously," she wrote, "and as my employer is old and bald, Ralph has not yet become jealous. Miss Allyn and I love our little flat better every day, and the only thing we miss that would make us perfectly happy is the daily companionship of my darling sister."

Marion smiled very happily as she folded the letter.

"Dear Dollie! She is perfectly happy, and, oh! I am so glad for her. Not for worlds would I darken her life with so much as a glimpse of the misery I am witnessing!"

The next letter was from her mother, and Marion opened it eagerly. She was almost sure to hear some news of Sallie. As she read the first page her brow grew dark, and at the end she crumpled the letter angrily in her hand.

"Silas Johnson is a brute! Oh, how I despise him!" she cried. "To think that he received my letter and paid no attention to it! He did not care enough about his wife to even go and get her. Poor Sallie! I wonder if she died in Bellevue, after all. Oh, I almost wish I had followed the ambulance, and I would have done it if I hadn't promised to take the *Thomas Brennan*."

She paced the floor for awhile in great perplexity. If Sallie was living she felt that she must know it.

After a time she opened another letter. It was from Mr. Ray, and her cheeks crimsoned as she read it.

"After all, there is at least one good man in the world yet," she said, bitterly; "and they are leaving England to-day, he and his sister, and how happy I shall be to renew their acquaintance."

As Marion went to pick up the last letter she shrank back in alarm. The handwriting was not familiar, but nevertheless she could guess who was the writer.

"I won't read it! I won't even touch it," she thought, indignantly. "How could he write to me, the cowardly fellow!"

Then a feeling of shame passed over Marion's soul. She was condemning this man unheard, which was not like her just nature.

"There must be some mistake," she whispered slowly. "Kittie may have found that picture, or perhaps she was still delirious when she told me. After all, why should I believe so absolutely in a dying girl's word? Is not the brain sadly clouded and perhaps entirely irresponsible at such a moment? No, I will not convict him until I have heard his story! It is only just, and I shall read his letter."

It was such a pleasant, jolly letter, yet Marion almost shivered as she perused it carefully.

It was not until she was putting the letter back in the envelope that she discovered an extra scrap of paper.

The doctor had thought of another word to say, apparently, and there was not room to add it to his already overfilled letter. Marion read the slip of paper with dilated eyes. The news it gave her was, to say the least, extraordinary.

"By the way, Miss Marlowe," the postscript read, "a little maid servant of mother's ran away a couple of weeks or so ago, and both mother and myself have worried considerably about her. The cause of our worry is simply that the child had been betrayed and we had hoped to help her in her hour of trouble. I mention this, knowing that such cases land frequently in 'Charity,' so please keep your eyes open for such a young lady. Her name is Kittie, and she is about sixteen, and very pretty."

Marion passed her hand thoughtfully across her brow. She was, if anything, more mystified and astounded than ever.

"If he is guilty, then no words can describe him," she said, finally, "for he must be a fiend incarnate if he could wrong the girl and then sit down calmly and write such a letter."

Marion was glad when the hour for duty came. She hurried back to her ward as to a haven of refuge.

That night, after sunset, Marion went out for a walk about the Island. She went alone from preference, as she wished to do some hard thinking.

Young Dr. Brookes had said that he would see her the next day, as he had found an excellent excuse for running over to the Island.

"What shall I say to him?" Marion asked herself as she stood on the sea-wall and gazed out over the water.

A squad of convicts passed near her as she stood there. They were marching with the prison "lockstep," which was now becoming familiar to Marion.

The young girl did not turn her eyes, for she dreaded to see them. A look at their rough faces always made her heart ache sadly.

As she stood in her simple frock, with her big white apron, she made a picture of beauty such as had never been seen on the Island.

Pretty faces and sweet faces had been seen there from time to time, but this willowy girl, with her mass of chestnut hair and her splendid head set on such graceful shoulders, would have attracted attention from any man in the land, then how much more the attention of these imprisoned unfortunates.

Not one convict alone, but a dozen of them glanced at her.

There was a sharp command from the guard, followed by a sullen answer. The next second, before Marion realized what was happening, there came a splash in the water. One of the convicts in desperation had leaped into the river.

"Forward! March!" cried a guard, in almost furious tones.

The squad moved on toward the penitentiary without so much as turning their heads, while one of the guards, rifle in hand, stepped quickly to the wall beside Marion.

"Come back, or I'll fire!" he called out, sternly, as a smooth shaven head appeared slowly above the surface.

Marion reached up instinctively and grasped the guard's arm.

"Don't! don't!" she gasped. "He will come back; I am sure of it!"

The man's gaze never wavered from the head above the water

"If I had a boat I could save him," he said,

very coolly, "but I haven't, and I must get him. That's all there is about it!"

"You mean he must not escape?" said Marion, in agony.

"I lose my job if he does," was the sullen answer. Then he raised the rifle, with one finger on the trigger.

"Once more, come back or I'll fire!" he bawled, distinctly.

There was a little splash in the water as the swimmer turned around.

"You can fire and be d—d!" he shouted, hoarsely.

Marion covered her eyes, so that she could not see what happened.

There was a report of a rifle that echoed across the water.

"Hell Gate" or its vicinity had received another victim.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARION FINDS SALLIE.

As Marion rushed back to the hospital a boat moved slowly away from the little dock. It was the boat from Bellevue and had left its usual quota of patients. The horrible scene which she had just witnessed was one which she knew would remain with her always and which she would almost have given her life to have prevented.

"Oh, how terrible his life must have been!" she thought, "if the poor fellow preferred death in such a horrible manner.

Then, curiously enough, on the very steps of the hospital she came face to face with the "Bible reader."

"What has happened?" asked the woman, as she read Marion's horrified expression.

"A convict shot and drowned," was the young girl's low answer. "Another victim has paid the penalty of sin or weakness!"

"Unrepentant, unforgiven," murmured the woman, in horror.

The young girl turned upon her with an agonized countenance.

"We cannot say that—we do not know," she said very sharply; then she fled hastily up the steps and into the building.

In order to reach the floor Marion had to pass the reception ward, and, as usual, she glanced in at the door in passing.

There was something going on that was out of the ordinary, but she was too upset to inquire into its meaning.

All that night the scene that she had witnessed haunted her, and she arose the next morning looking pale and haggard. As she left her room the Superintendent of Nurses met her. She was a middle-aged woman, rather stout and very dignified.

"I am going to transfer you to the medical ward for awhile, Miss Marlowe," she said, briefly. "You can go in there at once and report to Miss Franklin."

Marion bowed and turned in the direction indicated. It was a sad disappointment to her to be obliged to leave the "Maternity." "I almost love Miss Williams," she said to herself, "but as I seem to have a faculty for loving almost everybody, perhaps I shall love Miss Franklin."

As she reached the entrance to the ward she stopped a moment. There were several new patients being put to bed, and Miss Franklin was busy.

Suddenly from the direction of the patients' elevator there came a fearful shriek.

Marion's face turned pale and her knees trembled as she heard it.

Miss Franklin darted past her just as the elevator stopped and let out an orderly and two doctors, who were all struggling with a patient.

Marion shrank back against the wall to give them a chance to pass her, and as she did so she overheard the house physician saying something to Miss Franklin.

"It developed yesterday as she was coming up on the boat. I'll have her transferred to Ward's Island to-morrow."

"And meanwhile we'll have all the other patients standing on their heads," was Miss Franklin's curt answer. "It seems to me that all the lunatics are brought straight to the 'Medical'!"

"Can't help it this time," said the doctor, smiling, "and you know you can manage her the best of any one, Miss Franklin."

The head nurse flushed at this genuine compliment. She was as conscientious as she was exacting, and such words were her recompense.

For the next few minutes everything was in commotion, for with a sudden effort the new patient sprang from the orderly's arms and, rushing the length of the ward, bounded up on a table which held some charts and glasses.

"Quick! before she secures a weapon!" said the doctor to the orderly in a low, fierce tone.

The orderly sprang forward, but he was a minute too late. The woman had snatched a couple of glasses and cracked them together. With a piece of jagged glass in each hand she stood, alert and waiting.

Just at this very moment Marion took a step into the ward. She opened her eyes wider as she stared hard at the woman.

"Come on, Sile, and I'll finish you!" shrieked the poor, crazy woman defiantly. "Jest strike me ag'in, yer coward, an' I'll kill yer, Silas Johnson!"

"My goodness! It is Sallie!" cried Marion with a gasp. "Oh, be careful of her, doctor! It is Sallie! Poor, dear Sallie."

Before Marion could say more Miss Franklin stood before her.

"Hush! you simpleton!" she said, sternly. "Don't you see what you are doing? Is it any reason because you know her that you should frighten all the patients!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry," cried Marion, who was scarlet with embarrassment. "I will not make another sound—only do let me go to her."

Miss Franklin smiled in a sarcastic way. "Certainly, go to her if you wish and quiet her if you can. She evidently takes the orderly for some other person."

"She thinks he is Silas Johnson, her husband," said Marion, as she started down the ward. "Oh, can it be possible that this is poor Sallie!"

"Don't go near her yet, miss," said the orderly, as Marion approached. "She's 'as mad as a March hare.' She'd cut your face open with that glass in a minute. We've got to do a little planning to capture the lady."

Marion looked at Sallie as she crouched on the table. Her face was ashen, her eyes red and glaring, and her hair, which was always poor Sallie's one beauty, fell in unkempt masses over her back and shoulders.

Not once did she take her burning gaze from the face of the orderly, and fierce, undying hatred was stamped upon her features.

"If you will only go away, I am sure I can calm her," said Marion, bravely. "Sallie will not hurt me—even if she is crazy."

"You can go, orderly," said the physician, who was close to Marion. "I think this nurse can quiet the girl, and I don't wish to resort to force if it can be avoided."

Marion thanked him with a smile, and the orderly backed away with a grin of delight.

It was not always pleasant to be taken for a crazy woman's husband.

"Sallie! Sallie! Don't you know me?" asked Marion, softly, as she walked up slowly and stood beside the table.

The maniac did not notice her until the orderly had disappeared, then with a sigh of relief she dropped the sharp weapons that she had been clutching.

"He'll never strike me again now, Marion," she cried, shrilly, "I've done jest as yer said. I've defied him at last, an' now I'm goin' ter run away an' go tew the city."

CHAPTER XIV.

MARION'S FIRST PROPOSAL.

It was several days before Sallie recovered her senses, but she had not been transferred, much to Marion's satisfaction.

With the last disappearing trace of fever her reason was slowly restored, and her delight was unbounded when she found herself with Marion.

"I'll never go back," she said over and over. "I'll learn tew do nursing and stay right here, Marion. Do beg them tew let me stay! I know I can be useful."

But Sallie was destined to go back to Silas, although not exactly in the manner she had imagined.

A letter from Deacon Marlowe informed Marion of Silas Johnson's death. He had been killed by a fall on the ice in his own meadow. Neither Marion nor Sallie said much about the news, but they were both too frank and honest to express any sham sorrow.

Marion's first leave of absence was to put Sallie on the train and send her back to

Hickorytown, a weak, wasted woman. Before they started down to the boat Miss Williams came out in the corridor and handed something to Marion. It was a small, flat package done up in brown paper. "I found them pinned to poor Kittie's one frock," she said, sadly, "and as the child had no friends and the baby is dead, I thought perhaps you would like to have them."

Marion took the parcel with a curious feeling of horror. It seemed a dreadful way to become possessor of Reginald Brookes' picture.

"I'll keep them," she said, slowly, "for I did love the girl, and perhaps I may be able to learn something about her some day."

On her way to the little flat Marion mailed a note to Reginald Brookes, for she had decided at last that she must settle the matter of the picture.

He had called at the hospital twice, but she had been too busy to see him. Thanks to her work, the excuse was genuine in both instances.

"Oh, Marion! I'm so glad!" cried Dollie as she admitted her. "That dear old 'baldy' of mine has given me a day's vacation. If he hadn't I would have missed you, and that would have been awful."

Miss Allyn came in and hugged Marion enthusiastically, and in a very short time they were all seated at a cozy dinner.

"I want you to tell me something, Alma," said Marion, after she had heard all the news and both girls looked at her quickly, there was so much seriousness in her manner.

"What is it, dear?" asked Miss Allyn, curiously.

"I want you to tell me what you know of Reginald Brookes," said Marion, quietly. "There is a reason why I should know all that I can possibly learn about him."

"Oh, Marion, he hasn't proposed to you already, has he?" asked Dollie.

"No, indeed," said Marion, laughing, "but I have another reason for wishing to know all I can about him. I will tell you both what it is just as soon as I think I am right in doing so."

"Well, I will tell you what I know," said Miss Allyn, blushing a little. "I've known Reginald Brookes ever since he was born, so I think I can speak with some authority."

Marion held her breath and bent forward to listen, and the eagerness in her manner did not escape Miss Allyn.

"Regie Brookes is one of the best and noblest fellows that ever lived," she said, distinctly, "and on a certain occasion, several years ago, I was fool enough to refuse to marry him."

"Oh, Miss Allyn!" gasped Dollie, "was Dr. Brookes in love with you and did you throw him over on account of that—that Mr. Colebrook?"

"I guess those are about the facts in the case," said Miss Allyn, bitterly. "Some women are big geese where men are concerned, but I wasn't simply a goose, I was a whole flock," she added, laughing.

"Do you suppose he is all over it?" asked Dollie, who was beginning to feel sympathetic.

"I hope so, I am sure," said Miss Allyn, quickly. "Why, that was years ago—we were almost children."

"You would not believe him guilty of wronging a poor girl, would you?" asked Marion, her cheeks tingling as she said it.

"Never!" cried Miss Allyn, emphatically. "He could not do it! Regie Brookes is the soul of chivalry and honor!"

"Then, I will tell you what I mean," said Marion, slowly, and she repeated the sad story of Kittie's death and the subsequent detail of the photograph now in her possession.

When she had finished her story, Dollie looked bewildered, but Miss Allyn's expression of absolute faith had not changed an atom.

"Let me see the picture," she said at once.

Marion drew the little package from her pocket and started to open it.

"I suppose it is in here; Miss Williams said it contained all of poor Kittie's treasures," she said as she tore off the paper and laid the contents on the table.

There was a handkerchief, a bit of ribbon and a brass locket in the package. Then Marion caught her breath as she discovered two pictures.

"This is his!" cried Miss Allyn, snatching up the one of young Brookes.

There was a glad cry from Marion at the very same minute. She was staring hard at the other picture.

"Oh, how wrong I was! How unjust!" she cried, remorsefully. "See! here is the picture of another young man, and Kittie has left no doubt as to who he is, for she has scrawled across the back of it, 'This is the father of my baby.'"

The girls both looked at the picture and the words which were written on it, while Marion censured herself in the most vigorous language.

"He is a common-looking fellow, almost brutal," said Dollie, looking again at the picture. "Oh, what a pity Miss Williams hadn't found this first! I can see by her face that Marion has suffered!"

"I have, indeed," said Marion, honestly. "It nearly killed me to think so badly of the doctor."

"Well, you were not altogether to blame," said Miss Allyn, consolingly. "The circumstances were startling. It would have convinced almost any one."

There was a peal at the bell as Miss Allyn spoke, and the next moment Dollie had ushered a caller into the little parlor.

"It is Dr. Brookes," whispered Marion to Miss Allyn. "I asked him to come, but do you know I almost dread to face him, now that I know how I have wronged him."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Allyn, sensibly. "Just put that out of your mind, Marion. You did him an injustice and have regretted it sincerely. There is no use in torturing yourself by telling him about it."

"But his picture," said Marion, a little helplessly.

"Tell him exactly how you got it, and he will probably explain. No doubt the girl stole it while she was working for his mother."

Marion took her advice and followed it carefully, telling him, in the presence of her friends, of Kittie's death, but without mentioning the poor girl's words about the picture.

Dr. Brookes looked grieved to hear of the girl's death, but he smiled when he saw the photograph of himself. It was just as Miss Allyn had guessed—the little maid had stolen it.

"The first instance on record of any young lady caring enough about me to want my picture," remarked the young man, with a mischievous glance at Miss Allyn.

For once the young lady was not ready with a gay reply, and Marion, with great tact, managed to turn the conversation.

After a little while both Dollie and Miss Allyn excused themselves, and Marion and Reginald Brookes were alone together.

"Miss Marlowe," said the doctor, after they had been chatting for some time, "I came here to-night on a rather serious errand. I hope I shall not frighten you by telling you about it, but honestly I can't keep it to myself much longer."

He spoke so earnestly and so gently that Marion's cheeks flushed in an instant. She seemed to feel what was coming, although she tried not to show it.

"You are a dear, good girl, Miss Marlowe," he whispered, coming closer to her on the sofa, "and I'm an impetuous chap—I can't make love on schedule! You see, it's this way," he went on, talking eagerly, "I fell in love with you that night on the train. It came over me in a second, and I couldn't resist it. Not that I tried very hard," he said, laughing a little and pressing the slender fingers that he had found and imprisoned.

"But you don't know me at all, Dr. Brookes," Marion tried to answer.

"Oh, I do, indeed!" was the ardent reply. "I know that you are good and brave and noble. I know that your sister and Miss Allyn love you dearly. Then my mother almost fell in love with you that evening, too, and last, but not least, I know that I love you, and if that isn't enough I'd like to know what is lacking."

He was kneeling close by her side now, looking up into her eyes, and as Marion saw his handsome face, with its candid, fearless expression, she felt overwhelmed with shame that she had ever doubted him.

Still, he was waiting for her to answer and she must be perfectly honest: She liked him exceedingly well, but did she love him?

Almost as if for answer, the dark, pleading face of Mr. Ray seemed to rise before her vision. Marion caught her breath quickly and her voice trembled as she answered:

"Wait—please wait," she murmured, with a bewitching smile. "I do not know my own mind yet—and your words are so unexpected."

"All right, Marion," said the young man, as he touched his lips to her hand. "I will wait, of course, for I do not wish you to be mistaken, but, oh, Marion, dear, do please try to love me!"

The last glance between them was one of loyal friendship. As he bade her good night Marion was proud that he loved her.

"It will all come right some day," she murmured to herself. "Some day my heart will choose between them, but until then the duties of life are before me and I must go patiently on in the career I have chosen."

THE END.

No. 4 of MY QUEEN is entitled "Marion Marlowe's Noble Work; or, The Tragedy at the Hospital," a story of the deepest interest, in which Marion passes through many thrilling experiences.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY GRACE SHIRLEY

NOTE.—This department will be made a special feature of this publication. It will be conducted by Miss Shirley, whose remarkable ability to answer all questions, no matter how delicate the import, will be much appreciated, we feel sure, by all our readers, who need not hesitate to write her on any subject. Miss Shirley will have their interests at heart and never refuse her assistance or sympathy.

The following letters are a few which we have received from time to time, addressed to the editors of our different publications, the answers to which will be found interesting. STREET & SMITH.

"My dear Miss Shirley, will you please answer this question? I would not dream of asking it if it was not such a serious matter. Is there any subject relating to matrimony and married life that is too indelicate for my fiance and myself to discuss before marriage? There are one or two things that I wish to settle, and my mother says I would be unmaidenly to even whisper them. Please give me your candid opinion on the subject. LENA W."

Absolute confidence between engaged people and a perfect understanding of each other's wishes and temperaments is the surest possible foundation for a successful marriage. The ignorance which is taken to the altar does not affect two people alone, but is perpetuated frequently for many generations, and is always accompanied with misunderstanding and misery. It is a mother's part to look into such questions as have embarrassed my correspondent. Some mothers are sadly negligent in their duty towards their children. A little plain speech would have saved much suffering. All subjects are holy that have to do with the solemn obligations of matrimony.

"I have been engaged for three years and expect to be married next spring. Now that I am almost face to face with this change in my life that I have anticipated with so much pleasure, I am ashamed to confess that I almost dread it. I love my betrothed dearly, but I am so afraid that I shall not be happy when my whole existence is wrapped up in him and his affairs. All the time that we have been engaged I have seen other friends, and we have both gone out a great deal. When I become a married woman I am afraid that I shall find the monotony unbearable. Do you think that I am very wicked to feel so, and had I better postpone my marriage for a time? ALICE D. K."

Your diffidence is not an unusual feeling, nor one of which to be ashamed. No woman of delicate sensibilities can face so radical a change in her whole existence without nervousness.

Those who take such a matter calmly are thicker skinned than their sisters. There is no reason why the "monotony" should be unbearable. You and your husband can still enjoy the pleasures of society, but enjoy them together, and there is nothing more pleasant in life than the chat together after the ball or party or theatre. When you have both devoted yourselves to entertaining others for an evening you will be glad indeed to have your husband get your wrapper and slippers for you and to cuddle up on a cozy armchair and talk the evening's events over with him before you sleep.

"I am in deep trouble and know of no one to turn to but you, dear Miss Shirley. I have been engaged to a young man for over a year, and we expected to be married this winter. Last night he told me that he did not want to marry me unless I knew everything about him, and then he told me that he had once stolen a large sum of money from his employer, and that he had been arrested, but his father paid the money back and he was released. Since then he has paid his father back and has been upright and made his way in the world; but it seems awful to me to marry a man with almost the shadow of a crime hanging over him. Won't you tell me what you think about it? MINNIE A."

The poet says:

"I hold it truth with him who sings—
That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

That a man has stepped aside and repented is the best possible proof of his integrity. If you cannot value a lover who is honest enough to want to come to you with his whole life open as a book for you to read, you cannot have much appreciation of true manliness. The man who can live down a thing like that and make his way in the world afterward is a man to be proud of, and we judge that he is well worthy of any girl's true affection. If you loved him you would not hesitate a moment, but would help him to forget the past and to "go forward to meet the shadowy future without fear and with a manly heart."

We wish that we knew the young man personally so that we could clasp his hand in friendship and tell him that we would stand by him in his earnest endeavor.

"I am at variance with my lover on a subject that I am afraid deeply concerns our future happiness. My lover is a Unitarian, while I and my family have always been Episcopalians. We differ on religious matters now, and I am afraid that our differences will be more serious after marriage. My family and myself have all been at him to join our church, but he won't do it.

"Ought I to insist upon his accepting my faith with me or should that be left open for discussion after we are married? GRACE P."

If the question of a belief is more important to you than the affection of your lover we advise you to relinquish him at once. True love will not let such subjects as religion or politics interfere with its tranquillity. No doubt your lover's belief is quite as precious to him as yours is to you, and if you cannot win him over by intelligent, kindly arguments you had better allow him to follow his own inclinations. Always remember that the right to disagree belongs to every individual, but there is no reason for such disagreement being a source of misery. In a general way, we would advise settling all such matters before marriage. Bickering is bad enough when people are not bound to each other by any tie, but it is ten-fold worse when there is a compact between them.

Your lover has as much right to his religious views as you have to yours, and the sooner you recognize that right—the sooner you will have proved your own true womanliness.

"I have always been called a 'flirt' by my girl friends just because I liked to have a good time with the boys. There are four or five of them now that want me to marry them, but there is only one that I really care anything about, and I'm not sure that I care anything for him. I do feel badly when I see him looking disconsolate when I am flirting with some one else, and I am always sorry when I have hurt his feelings.

"Do you think this is love, and if I married him, do you think I could be a good wife to him? I would not like to give him the worst of the bargain. HATTIE B. S."

Your letter seems to us to be a candid admission of your feelings. You do not state your age, but we should imagine that you were young and just a little foolish.

We hardly think you have experienced the feeling called love, although your evident pity for the one young man's feelings is akin to the sentiment. You should endeavor to redeem your reputation at once as the sobriquet of "Flirt" is not very desirable. You will never win the love of a good man so long as you show that your nature is fickle. We should advise you to devote your time to your work or your books and try to develop your character. In this way you may be able to discover your exact feelings towards the young man whom you seem to prefer at present.

"In spite of the fact that I have steadily repulsed him, a young man of my acquaintance has stuck to me for months. I have told him plainly that I do not believe that I will ever really love any one, but he has persisted in showing me attention, and now I almost look to him for all my friendship, for the other men, I am sure, do not really care for me—they are just flirting like I am myself. I know this one would propose if I gave him the chance, but I won't give him an opportunity unless I am going to accept him. Do you think I would be doing him an injury to marry him? I am not vicious, but I am afraid that I would want to flirt after marriage just the same as I do now. OLIVE W."

By no means marry this young man until you are sure you love him. There have been too many of these uncertain marriages made already without your swelling the number.

A woman who would "flirt" after marriage must be terribly lacking in dignity, and if she does not respect herself she cannot expect to be respected. We should judge that the young man you speak of is a very nice person, and we sincerely hope for his sake that he will marry an honest, self-respecting woman.

"We live in the suburbs, and I have been coming to New York to matinees ever since I wore long dresses. I met a fellow at a continuous performance one afternoon, and we struck up an acquaintance.

"Since then I have corresponded with him and have met him in the city a number of times, and had luncheon with him. Now he wants me to go to the theatre with him some evening and spend the night at his boarding-place.

"I have met his landlady and she is simply lovely and I know she will see that I come to no harm. But would I be doing wrong to accept the invitation?

"Some of my girl friends say that I could not do worse, and some of them say that it is no worse to spend the night in the city than to spend the entire day—as I have done, several times.

"Won't you please advise me, as I am only nineteen years old and realize that I can't judge for myself. ISABEL F. A."

We cannot quite understand your letter, Isabel. In all our experience we have never heard of anything so extraordinary! If the young man you speak of was living at home with his mother and sisters, and it was their invitation we could find no fault with your staying under the same roof with your friend, but the idea of your staying at his boarding-house is beyond the bounds of respectability, and in spite of her smiles, no one would think worse of you than his landlady. The manner in which you met this young man is thoroughly unconventional. Be careful that your acquaintance with him does not terminate disastrously. You speak very truly when you say you "cannot judge for yourself," but at nineteen years of age you should show more wisdom and discretion. We are inclined to be suspicious of this young man's motives; but a girl who allows herself to be "picked up" at a continuous performance, as the saying is, can hardly expect to be treated any differently. You had better discontinue this acquaintance if you do not wish trouble.

"Do you object to advising a young man, Miss Shirley? I am nineteen years old and am engaged to be married. The girl I love is very large and stout, she weighs nearly 200. I weigh only 138, and that is what is the matter. Don't you think I would be foolish to marry such a big girl, even if I do love her? What in the world would I do if she should grow any bigger? I'd look foolish and feel foolish every time I went out with her. Of course, I want to do what is right. I know she'd never get another fellow because of her size. Do you think I ought to marry her and be a martyr? JAMES L."

No, James, we do not advise you to play the "martyr," but it is not altogether because of your sweetheart's size, but because we are confident that you do not love her. Why, James, if you really loved her, you would be delighted to think there was so much of her! We are sorry for the girl, but we do not agree with you that she will never have another lover. We feel sure that some noble, honest fellow will fall in love with her some day and be more than glad to marry her in spite of her superfluous adipose tissue. We fancy your soul is about as small as your body. At any rate, you are sadly lacking in moral courage.

"I have a very serious question to ask you, dear Miss Shirley, it is this: Can a girl love two men and love them both sincerely? I have never heard of any one doing it, but I confess that this is exactly my predicament. I love two young men and could be happy with either of them. Do you think it better not to marry either, or would it be safe for me to marry the first one that asks me? I feel sure that they will both propose before long. NINA B."

Your question does not impress us as being very serious. If you are so general in your affection you might toss up a cent to see which you should marry. Apparently you are easily pleased in the matter of a husband. For the sake of the young men, however, we trust you will not marry either one. If they are honest young men they each deserve a good wife, one who will love them and them alone, with true, loyal affection.

"The girls in the school that I attend all enjoy athletics, and we recently organized a football team. We wear a suit with trousers like the boys wear for the game with a short skirt over them that reaches almost to our knees. No one found any fault with our fun until this week when several of the more strait-laced people in the town complained to some of our parents that they thought it was immodest for us to go through the streets to the grounds where we play wearing our costume. Won't you let me know what you think about it? ETTA W."

Dr. Mary Walker has worn trousers for years, and she is a very estimable woman, still we have never heard of her playing football. It does not seem to us to be objectionable at all, for trousers and short skirts are certainly very convenient and healthful. You did not say how old the girls in your school are, but if they are over sixteen we would certainly advise them to give up football. There are many other games just as healthful, and far more graceful. I hope you girls have not been trying to kick the knobs off of the gate posts as you went to and from your play. Girls who imitate boys are sometimes given to these pranks, and in that event we do not blame the natives for complaining.

"This seems almost a foolish subject for me to write to you about, Miss Shirley, but I hope you will find time to answer me. The young man whom I am engaged to simply hates pet animals. Now, I have a pet cat that I raised from a wee little kitten, and I love her and all animals dearly. Frank is always teasing her and grumbling if I pet her. I have been wondering if a man with this disposition would make a good husband. It seems absurd sometimes even to me to think it would make any difference in our married life, but I have thought about this one trait of his so much that I want to hear what your opinion is. CARRIE S. S."

We are very sorry indeed to learn of this trait in your betrothed. It shows a bad disposition to dislike animals, yet it does not always follow that a man will be unkind to a woman because of that trait in his disposition. Personally I would not have a man about who was unkind to animals, and I am inclined to think that such a man would be apt to make almost any woman unhappy. The poor animals suffer enough, and there is no one to protect them but ourselves. If we neglect this duty it seems to me that we are culpable and deserve, even if we do not receive, some severe form of punishment. We do not blame you at all for feeling as you do, and advise you to try and reform your lover, if possible.

"Please answer this question and oblige a constant reader: Is it proper to allow a young man to put his arm around you when you are riding in the surface cars or elevated, or when you are coming home from Coney Island on the boat. I have allowed my escort to do so several times, and some of my girl friends say that it looks very silly. I am in love with this young man and he is in love with me. Is there any harm in our showing our affection? LAURA."

The habit of hugging in public is certainly very bad taste, and we agree with your friends that it also looks silly. In the first place, unless the young man is engaged to you he has no right to embrace you at all, and you would be much more modest and ladylike if you refused to allow him such privileges in public. Embraces are but the demonstrations of holy affection. They should not be paraded before the eyes of the public.

"Do you think it is wrong for a married woman to engage in business? I have a desirable situation offered me, and am tempted to accept it, but my husband objects so decidedly that I have doubted the propriety of my idea of working. My husband seems to feel that I have no right to work, and says that he will not live with me if I do.

"We have no children and I would be glad of

the occupation. Please let me have your advice on the matter. MRS. ELLA W."

We see no harm in your engaging in business with your husband's consent, but if he does not wish it and can provide well for you without, we should certainly advise you to yield to his wishes. Married women can discover many home occupations and amusements, and in other ways develop their minds and talents. There is no necessity for home life becoming monotonous. The question of propriety does not enter into the subject. Consider your husband's wishes because you love him and do not disagree with him unless it is a matter of principle. What did you marry him for if you wanted to go into business? If he had desired a business woman for a wife he would probably have married one.

"I am eighteen years of age and am very much in love with a young man, but there are several things about him which annoy me exceedingly, and I hope you will be kind enough to give me your opinion. This young man wears very good clothing, but when we go out together I frequently notice that his garments need brushing, his linen is soiled and his finger nails are in a dreadful condition. Are these faults serious, or are they only trifles? I have been brought up to be very particular, but I do not intend to be over-fastidious. Ought not a man to always be clean shaven when he goes out with a lady?

"ARABELLA W."

We can understand your feelings perfectly, my dear girl, for there is hardly anything more repulsive than uncleanly habits. It is possible the young man has had no training in this direction, but, of course, this does not excuse him entirely. We would advise you to use a little tact in throwing out hints.

Speak admiringly of the neat habits of others whom you meet, and see if you cannot awaken him to a sense of his own shortcomings. If he does not mend his ways, and you really intend to marry him, we should advise you to call his attention to each defect, kindly and considerately. If he becomes indignant and refuses to yield to your suggestions, we would certainly advise you to give him up. "Cleanliness is next to godliness," and it is much easier to acquire. There is no excuse for either man or woman possessing uncleanly habits.

"A young man whom I have known for a month has asked me to marry him. He is handsome and agreeable, and I love him dearly. Do you think it is wrong to marry on such short acquaintance? He is nearly six feet tall and looks lovely on horseback. It will break my heart if you advise me not to marry him.

"LIDA D. B."

Poor Lida! We feel sorry for you, but what can we say? We have no desire to break your heart, but if we answer you at all we must try to speak honestly.

Because a man is "six feet tall" and looks "lovely on horseback," you must not take it for granted that he will make a good husband. It would be far better for you to endeavor to find out about his character and ability to support you before you fall so completely into the toils. We have seen many short acquaintances turn out satisfactorily, but we do not think it wise to enter into so important an alliance rashly unless each has previously been aware of the good character of the other. Try to curb your impressionable heart, Lida, until you are sure the young man is worthy of you.

"I have been engaged to be married for nearly three years, but am beginning to despair of the marriage ever being consummated. The young man to whom I am engaged is a very close-mouthed person, and I cannot find out what business he is engaged in, but every time I hint at matrimony he pleads poverty as an excuse for deferring the ceremony. I have seen him with fifty dollars in his pocket several times. Is not this enough to pay for a wedding?

"SARAH B."

We judge by your letter that the young man is not very deeply in love with you, and the fact that he does not tell you his business looks very suspicious. If a man has not sufficient confidence in you to tell you by what vocation he earns his living we should advise you to let him go and turn your attention to some one who is more open and candid. Fifty dollars will pay the minister, buy the ring, and furnish a supper, but it will not go far after the festivities are over. If that is the most he can call his own at any one time he is hardly in a position to take upon himself the responsibilities of a husband.

"Will you kindly do me the favor to answer the following questions? Does a naturally domineering man grow more gentle after marriage, and would you advise a young girl to marry a person with this disposition? ADDIE S."

Domineering men are sometimes made gentle by love, but, as a rule, matrimony only aggravates such a nature. A man who will dictate to a woman before marriage is quite likely to prove a tyrant after. We know of no habit that is much harder to cure than this, and would consider matrimony a very heroic measure. It would be much better for you to treat the disease with dignity and firmness before marriage and note the results. When you are once married it will be too late to experiment.

MY QUEEN.

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